



Teaching Techniques

Volunteers should use a variety of teaching methods and techniques to help youth learn. Volunteers should ask themselves what they want to teach and what they should do to help members understand. When teaching youth, try using the five senses. One cannot know the smell of a flower simply by reading about it. Neither can one judge the texture of a soil just by looking at it. The five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) are the gateway to the mind. From childhood, we all learn through these five senses.

Watch the reactions of the members of the group to judge if they are understanding what they are being told. If the youth seem confused, or are no longer paying attention, try to explain the topic using other techniques. It is important that you know each member.

Several teaching techniques are available: lecture, illustrated talk, discussion, question and answer, demonstration, work session or practical exercise, experimentation, tours and home visits, and exhibits. Experience in the use of these techniques comes only with practice.

1. Lecture

For this technique, the teacher usually speaks to groups from prepared notes without visual aids or opportunity for group questions.

This method is useful when new facts or information are presented, or when the time available is short.

It is recommended to tell members before you begin that you are going to talk for a while and that they will be active in discussing what they heard.

Combine this technique with others such as a small group discussion or the question-answer technique to allow the 4-H'ers to express their opinion.

2. Illustrated talk

This method is an offshoot of the lecture technique, in which the teacher supports the talk with such things as drawings, posters, copies of articles and other materials.

The drawings or posters need not be professional art pieces, they need only be interesting and clear. For example, in entomology, rather than just talking about the



various shapes and distinguishing characteristics of insects, sketch them on a large sheet of paper or blackboard or show an actual specimen or picture.

When the topic discussed is in the members' guide, you can have them follow along.

3. Discussion

This technique provides an opportunity for each 4-H'er to express ideas, discuss experiences and share information. You can divide the members into smaller groups and give them different topics to discuss.

When this method is used, members get involved and are likely to learn more because of this involvement, assuming that they had something to contribute at the beginning of the discussion.

For this learning to be effective, the discussion must have a defined direction. The group should know:

- What topic will be discussed.
- How to form teams.
- How to conduct the discussion.
- How much time will be allotted for discussion.
- How the group's work will be reported.

4. Question and answer technique

This technique is a quick and efficient way for the group to share knowledge. Questions from the leader can stimulate the participants to center their attention and thoughts on the subject. A question and answer session may take place in different ways. The leader may:

- Ask the question and address it specifically to a member of the group.
- Draw questions from the members that are answered by the leader or a resource person.
- Draw questions from the group, and then turn the question back to the group for an answer.

5. Demonstration

This technique, also known as method demonstration, involves the teacher showing youth how to do something. For example: how to

change a tire, prepare a recipe or make a tie knot.

Another kind of demonstration is the result demonstration. It is a way of teaching good practices. This technique allows the teacher to show the results that can be obtained from experimenting with objects, plants, etc. It could be demonstrated, for example, what happens to a white flower when blue dye is added to the water. This technique is a most effective teaching tool.

6. Work session or practical exercise

The work session is the backbone of 4-H work. Members, under the guidance of leaders, can test and perfect their new learning. For example: After having demonstrated to a group how to change a tire, allow members to practice.

This method can be used with any of the others because it allows youth to "learn by doing."

7. Experimentation

This is a successful technique for 4-H members when based on individual or group study. Here, the members see if their ideas will work.

8. Tours and home visits

This technique is especially helpful in projects that cannot be transported readily to the club meeting, such as crops, gardening, livestock, home improvement, and landscaping.

A home visit by the leader and fellow members can provide an opportunity for them to offer constructive suggestions.

Tours can also be arranged to view long-term result demonstrations, that is, places using recommended practices.

9. Exhibits

This method consists of sharing a learning experience with others. In an exhibit, one demonstrates or talks about a topic related to a specific project.

An exhibit is also useful for showing others what 4-H youth are learning in their projects.

Reference: This publication is an edited and updated version of the "Texas 4-H Leaders Handbook."

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